

CATALOGUE *of the*
EXHIBITION

*of fifty-four
original paintings*

by CLARENCE GAGNON

illustrating the book
"MARIA CHAPDELAINE"

FEBRUARY 4TH TO MARCH 6TH,
ART ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL

MARCH 8TH TO APRIL 3RD,
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

1938

Art Gallery of Toronto. April 1938

Acknowledgment

Clarence Gagnon gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Mrs. Philip Mackenzie for permission to use for this catalogue, excerpts from the beautiful translation by her father W. H. Blake of Louis Hémon's "Maria Chapdelaine"; and also to those who have loaned the artistic and richly bound copies of this book.

Portraits of Quebec

The illustrations for "Maria Chapdelaine"
by Clarence Gagnon

Many artists have tried to portray the land of Quebec; many writers have echoed, each in his own way, the wordless yet mighty voice of this great province. Artists and writers both have shown in their work a depth of feeling which it is hard for any stranger to understand. What is there about Quebec and the people of Quebec that sets place and people apart? What is the secret of the charm that Quebec weaves around those who learn to know her? It is not only the wide, slow St. Lawrence, the white waterfalls of the St. Maurice, the vast canyon of the Saguenay, the Laurentians and the Gaspé hills. It is not only the wonder of summer, the blaze of autumn, the green against winter snow. It is not only the *Canadiens* who have kept their language and their faith in the land they have made, not only the little houses with their open doors, the scent of wood smoke and the sound of bells. But all these together are something great and unique; the place and the people are one; Quebec has a soul. That is the magic which has inspired so many an author and bewildered so many a politician. To some of our own people it has been given to catch a glimpse of the true Quebec; few strangers have ever seen or understood her. One indeed there was, Louis Hémon, who came from France, and wrote a story which pictured the Quebec he knew and loved. His "Maria Chapdelaine" will live as long as Canada endures. One of our own artists, Clarence Gagnon, set out to illustrate that lovely book and ended by giving us a series of pictures which would have told a story of its own had "Maria Chapdelaine" never been written.

The spirit of the land guided the artist's brush. The wonderful Canadian spring that Rudyard Kipling loved, summer on the rivers and in the hills, autumn and winter, the lumberjack in the woods, the good wife at her loom, the little church on a Sunday morning, all these and many other scenes make up a single whole. This set of pictures is a document of Canadian life, charming to the lover of colour and design, valuable to the student of our country and our people, beyond price to him who knows Quebec.

WILFRID BOVEY

Legends for individual pictures

- 1.—Indian Summer (title page).
- 2.—. . . the humbleness of the wooden church and the wooden houses . . . the gloomy forest edging so close . . .
- 3.—. . . all faced the top step where Napoleon Laliberté was making ready, in accord with his weekly custom to announce the parish news.
- 4.—The door opened and the men of the congregation began to come out of the church of Peribonka.
- 5.—. . . and the horse, aware that the usual drowsiness had possession of his master, slackened his pace.
- 6.—Old Chapdelaine fully awake now, was on his feet . . . just as they reached land, a cake of ice tilted . . .
- 7.—. . . and soon the travellers discerned a clearing in the forest, a mounting column of smoke. . .
- 8.—Madame Chapdelaine stood . . . dreaming . . . as the villages spoken of rose before her in memory.
- 9.—. . . invested with some peculiar quality of sweetness and peace, all that happened in that house far off in the woods.
- 10.—Eutrope Gagnon was their only neighbour . . . he appeared on the threshold lantern in hand.
- 11.—The distant and continuous thunder was the voice of the wild waters, silenced, all winter by the frost.
- 12.—. . . “We have only dogs to draw our sleds, fine strong dogs . . .”
- 13.—. . . he spoke of his journey on the North Shore to the headwaters of the rivers . . .

- 14.—Scarcely had François gone, when the two women and Tit'Bé knelt for the evening prayer.
- 15.—. . . a blazing sun warmed field and forest . . . the lingering patches of snow vanished even in the dark shade of the woods.
- 16.—Legaré and Esdras attacked the smaller ones with no other weapons but their axes . . .
- 17.—The sun dipped toward the horizon, disappeared . . . and the hour of supper brought to the house five men of the colour of the soil.
- 18.—They first cut the roots spreading on the surface, and chest against the bar, threw all their weight upon it. . .
- 19.—The fine weather continued and early in July the blueberries were ripe.
- 20.—At every abrupt turn, at every fall where logs jam and pile, would be found the strong and nimble river-drivers.
- 21.—The party ran its quiet course, an hour of cards, some talk with a visitor, these are still accounted happiness in the Province of Quebec.
- 22.—The blueberries were fully ripe in the burnt lands . . .
- 23.—. . . and the north-west wind blew for three days on end, steady and strong . . .
- 24.—Flies and mosquitoes rose in swarms from the cut hay, stinging and tormenting the workers . . .
- 25.—. . . the clay oven . . . one red gleam . . . Maria sat very still, delighting in the quiet and the coolness . . .
- 26.—September arrived . . .
- 27.—. . . harvest they must, for October approached . . .
- 28.—One October morning, Maria's first vision . . . was of countless snowflakes sifting largely from the sky . . .

- 29.—Of the birches, aspens, alders and wild cherries scattered upon the slopes, October made splashes of many-tinted red and gold.
- 30.—The moment for laying in wood is also that of the slaughtering.
- 31.—. . . the two men took the double-handed saw, and sawed, and sawed.
- 32.—“Possibly Wilfrid and Ferdinand might drive from St. Gédéon, if the ice on the lake were in good condition.”
- 33.—On the morrow of the storm . . . they took shovels to clear the way or lay out another route.
- 34.—To go to midnight mass is the natural desire of every French-Canadian peasant.
- 35.—. . . the snow-covered ground, and the menacing ranks of the dark forest . . .
- 36.—The shanty was not very far in the woods . . .
- 37.—She sees François making his way through the close-set trees, stiffened with cold . . . his skin raw with the pitiless nor'wester . . .
- 38.—“The roads are passable, Maria, we shall go to La Pipe on Sunday for the mass.”
- 39.—. . . and soon they were in the village with other sleighs before and all following them all going toward the church.
- 40.—March came . . .
- 41.—“The country is too rough, the work too hard; merely to earn one's living is killing toil.”
- 42.—“A paradise surely must it be this country to the South, where March is no longer winter and in April the leaves are green.”

- 43.—François had come in the full tide of summer from the land of mystery at the headwaters of the rivers.
- 44.—. . . were she to marry a man like Eutrope and accept as her lot a life of rude toil.
- 45.—. . . the cold-whitened ground and the loneliness of those measured woods.
- 46.—. . . in the ghostly dawn, Maria gave ear to the sounds of his departure . . .
- 47.—. . . the men lit their pipes, and the doctor with his feet against the stove held forth as to his professional labours . . .
- 48.—About midnight came Eutrope Gagnon bringing Tit-Zèbe, the bone-setter; he was a little, thin, sad-faced man, with very kind eyes . . .
- 49.—While the priest performed the sacred rites, and his low words mingled with the sighs of the dying woman.
- 50.—. . . the storm ended swiftly . . . in the strange deep silence . . .
- 51.—. . . to strive from dawn until nightfall, spending all strength in heavy tasks.
- 52.—. . . “But your mother snatched a stick and made straight for the bears.”
- 53.—A long silence followed in which Samuel Chapdelaine had nodded slowly towards his breast . . . as though he were falling asleep . . .
- 54.—. . . and Maria answered him—“Yes . . . if you wish I will marry you as you asked me to . . . in the Spring after this Spring now . . .”

